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ABSTRACT

The four conference papers presented here examine specific strategies and programs by which colleges and universities can design and adapt programs for adult students. In "Strategies of Adaptation" Rosalind K. Loring notes six major types of adaptation to which traditional, four-year schools have resorted (flexible schedules, simulated environments, special admission and retention policies, interdisciplinary degrees and programs, mass media delivery, and holistic programs such as contract learning and simulation gaming. She also discusses continuing barriers: notions of "academic excellence," systems of accumulating credits, and financial problems. Charlotte LeGates describes an interdisciplinary program developed by Justin Morrill College of Michigan State University--a pilot program for civil service workers who could attend at night and a permanent program, individually designed, in public policy and in society and law. In the third paper Mary Jim Josephs explains what a competency-based program is, how it can speak to the unique set of needs of nontraditional students, and how such an approach corresponds to the institutional need to create programs to recruit and retain nontraditional students. "An Experiment in Unbundling Services for Adults" by Joseph P. O'Neill deals with the issue of consumer protection--the question of equity for part-time and evening students in the tuition charges they pay. He examines the unit price system (credit-hour charge), the core and peripheral services involved, and some efforts at price sensitivity and repackaging underway in some schools. (JT)

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CURRENT ISSUES in Higher Education

ADAPTING INSTITUTIONS TO THE ADULT LEARNER: EXPERIMENTS IN PROGRESS

Rosalind K. Loring
Charlotte LeGates
Mary Jim Josephs
Joseph O'Neill

CE 018 108

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ADAPTING INSTITUTIONS TO THE ADULT LEARNER: EXPERIMENTS IN PROGRESS

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I. STRATEGIES OF ADAPTATION

Rosalind K. Loring

The title of this paper evokes images of add-on measures to deal with change in the student population: a temporary building attached to the main library; a trailer parked behind the science building; a closet converted to an office for the coordinator of the new project.

I am interested in the degree, the type and the dimensions of these adaptive changes for new students. Are the changes cosmetic, presenting an appearance of accommodation? Are they the result of careful analysis of social, political, and economic trends that affect the total institution? Are they even the response of considered policy reformulation that intends to integrate old and new?

More fundamentally, why is there a sudden surge of interest on the part of higher education in adult students? After all, university extensions (by whatever name) are *not* new; some are more than 75 years old. The literature of adult or continuing education can be traced back to the education of nurses who were headed overseas for World War I; to making citizens out of America's wave of immigrants; to the training of inexperienced manpower during World War II, and more recently to the attempts at solving racial and economic problems by creating new professional and para-professional occupations. The United States has always turned to adult educators to meet these educational needs. Until recently, this kind of education was not seen as part of the regular mission of the university, but as an extra, unique, or even burdensome obligation.

Now expectations are different. *Individual* adults expect that their institutions of higher learning will serve their needs on a consistent basis and that continuing change will be facilitated.

The challenge for the next decade is the development of the capacity of institutions of higher education to provide suitable educational concept and delivery systems for the potential population of adult learners. I say "potential" because national statistics indicate that 27 million adults were participating in some form of structured learning in 1975. Of these 27 million, 6.6 million were working toward college degrees; another 1.3 million for other credit; and 17 million were taking noncredit courses. The rate of growth in the education of adults—in *noncredit,* part-time coursework alone—increased by 52% from 1972 to 1975[1]*

Many educators are not yet reconciled with the possibilty that these adult learners may, in the near future, constitute a significant proportion of the student population of higher education. But enough administrators *are* aware of the promise, along with the problems, to begin the strenuous process of adaptation, innovation, or reorganization.

TYPES OF ADAPTATION

Generally speaking, there are six major types of adaptation to which traditional, four-year colleges and universities have resorted in trying to accommodate their new student populations. The first and most obvious one is the effort by many institutions to make their schedules more flexible. Beginning with the moving of graduate and professional courses to hours convenient to adults, flexible schedule arrangements have now been extended into the undergraduate years. Moreover, short, intensive programs like "educational vacations," weekend colleges, seminars, conferences, institutes, workshops, "learn-ins," mini-courses, and clinics, are now available to learners on both a credit and a noncredit basis.[2]

The second adaptation is associated with the increased flexibility of scheduling. Revised concepts of the traditional higher education setting have led to some ingenuous attempts to create an environment more compatible with and supportive of the subjects learned. Some examples have included a community in miniature, established in order to study communal problems; a conference center, modeled after the United Nations, to house philosophical discourse in a multilingual context; and field work that takes students into the community, functioning as tutors, counselors,

*One grey area in these statistics, however, is in the definition of "part-time students"—who tend to be adults—and whether they are included in the enrollment figures of individual universities and colleges. Some statistics show them separately, while others attempt to add the hours and equate the result as "full-time equivalents." Whether or not part-time students are included, and how we arrive at the enrollment figures, the important point is that part-time students have become countable in creditable numbers. The demand by adults for degrees and for access to the intellectual resources of the campuses has been accelerating just as demand for non-credit education increased earlier.

planners, and liaison persons. Less dramatic, but equally experimental are home-based independent study courses that use audio/video tapes or study guides. For the sake of convenience, office buildings, factories, military installations and store fronts are also used as educational settings. Undergraduate as well as advanced-degree learning are taking place in settings vastly different from the traditional, four-wall classroom.

A third institutional response is evidenced by the establishment of special admission and retention policies. Some institutions offer access to senior citizens and minority adults as students or auditors. While the rigid quotas for these special groups of students are far from being ideal and very often trigger vigorous debates and intervention from unexpected quarters, they are indicative of efforts to offer greater educational opportunity to disadvantaged groups. Also, the growing interest in "stopping-out" programs signifies attempts to formalize in-and-out arrangements for students in order to remove the barriers traditionally erected against those who drop-out—often for adult-life reasons. On a different level, women's programs have flourished under supportive environments, with classes focussed on women's needs for tutoring in mathematics or the sciences.

A fourth common response on the part of higher education institutions to the presence of adult learners is the development of interdisciplinary degrees and programs. The traditional compartmentalization of subjects and disciplines has become increasingly inadequate in trying to satisfy the wide spectrum of adult learners' needs and interests. The existence of programs awarding bachelors' and masters' degrees in general studies, liberal arts, and liberal sciences and the growing cluster of special subjects such as technical writing or sports administration has given increased flexibility to the choice of courses available to students. In many ways, these options signify a break from the homogeneity of offerings that the *Newman Report* identified as one of the major ills of higher institutions.[1] Moreover, they satisfy the pragmatic approach to education which adults as students generally have.

A fifth strategy that more and more colleges and universities are employing in reaching out to the mass of adult learners capitalizes on the mass media for the delivery of knowledge. The use of television, radio, and newspaper has widened the reach of the educational delivery system from a handful on campus to national audiences a hundred or a thousand times larger. As technology makes possible highly individualized, interactive, long-distance communication we can begin to serve the formerly disenfranchised. To some it seems that for the first time the Utopian vision of a learned society is on the horizon (or in the tube).

Method six is perhaps the most difficult to assess in terms of cost and benefit and the potential for being replicated. It covers all educational experiences conceived as holistic programs, which are, typically, fostered and challenged by special funding. These educational experiences include contract learning, simulation gaming, and the intense applications identified as "Hawthorne" effect programs.

Smaller institutions, and private institutions in general, seem to have built stepping stones across the chasm of tradition more easily than the large and publicly supported ones. But even that generalization is not totally correct, for several major public universities have designated one or more of the responses mentioned as means for including adults in their campus planning and use of their resources.

For this reason, adults are understandably confused in trying to discover which institution offers the best alternative, or even if there are alternatives. One consequence has been the rapid rise of special counseling and information services for adult learners. Peer counseling, group counseling, computer information systems and outreach programs have mushroomed. The encouragement of foundation and federal funds are helping to focus and maintain adult students' interest in postsecondary education.

In light of this explosion in programs and processes, there is surprisingly little available data about the patterns and consequences of institutional efforts to meet the needs of the growing number of adults who seek some share of the resources of colleges and universities. We need to know more about the *number* of institutions that have attempted specific adaptations; equally urgently, we need their assessments of costs and benefits. To the best of my knowledge, there is little other than impressionistic data. We can describe better the innovative activities than we can plot the consequent changes or evaluate their outcomes. Although we know that, on the whole, these changes have been created through the efforts of individuals who saw the necessity for new functions and goals, we also know that there *are* a few splendid examples of total reassessment of institutional mission.

CONTINUING BARRIERS

Many problems still exist that bar higher education institutions from fully providing for adult learners. Foremost is the deep-seated notion of "academic excellence." Accustomed to the more select body of young adults who have reached higher education through the familiar academic path, most college administrators and faculty seem to be obsessed with the fear that education geared to adults implies a lowering of academic standards. ((We in adult education have had the same concern for quality, but have learned that excellence may be achieved, regardless of the age of the student, the location of the course or the method of instruction.) The very fact that extension and continuing education departments are treated as "secondary citizens" in the university community and that usually the credits awarded by extension courses are not considered equivalent to those of regular programs, points out a persistent resistance to make fundamental changes on the part of institutions of higher education.

The traditional approach taken to preserve "academic excellence" is the time-based credit hour system of measuring instruction, where the purpose of grading and testing is not so much for assessing students' intellectual growth as for providing a rite of passage for entrance to the next level. Grades and scores thus obtained, as research undertaken on various professional groups shows, bear little or no relationship to any measure of a student's future accomplishment in the field. The growing corporate role of training and retraining employees who already have degrees, combined with the projected estimation that only 20% of the jobs during the 1980's will utilize the kind of knowledge typically acquired by a college student, raises other serious questions.

Although the examples cited above are tied to instrumental learning, the same critique applies to the validation of excellence in the arts and the humanities. The root of the problem of quality control seems to arise from a deeply entrenched reliance on one set of criteria in assessing educational productivity. Statistically, it is self-evident that on any uni-dimensional assessment, about half of the population will, by definition, fall below the average. To adults, such a traditional approach is bound to seem unjust. To society, such an approach appears obsolete, as contemporary living calls for complex dimensions of human abilities, either selectively or collectively.

A second barrier is the system of accumulating credits, which until now has been primarily designed for regular students. It is inevitable that some credits acquired by adult learners will not be accepted when they transfer from one college or university to another, since courses of the same title taught by different institutions are not always equivalent. (However, the same argument can also be used against courses offered by different instructors in the same institution.) In view of the present high rate of mobility, inability to accumulate credits discourages many potential adult learners from embarking upon further studies.

A similar problem encountered by adult learners as they attempt to change from one professional program to another is the negation of most, if not all credits accumulated from a previous program. The anticipation of starting again from square-one often reduces the initial motivation of adult learners.

A third category of issues restricting adaptation of higher education for adults can be loosely described as financial barriers. The National Advisory Council on Extension and Continuing Education reports that as of September 30, 1977, 395 federally supported postsecondary education programs were in operation. While 212 have as their principal focus continuing education or community service, only a few relate directly to institutions of higher education.[4] Of the billions of dollars expended in the 395 programs, only a small proportion is pegged for university programs. In fact, delivery of services to persistent and continuous adult learners is left largely to non-governmental public and private institutions. Because there is local institutional responsibility for the provision of education for adults, the decision to provide financial support rests with state governments or separate institutional budgets. The result is an uneven and unfair cost pattern for adults.

The education of adults in institutions of higher education is currently financed largely through individual tuition fees, with some few cases of foundation or government assistance for specific projects. Obviously, these sources become responsible for determining the direction and development of education. In the case of an extension program, the courses become "tuition-driven." That is, because of the lack of funding, the decision to make available part-time offerings for adults is usually determined by an adequate number paying substantial fees to cover

costs. On another financial level, if the institution is developing new ways of accommodating adults in the regular program for the wrong reason (i.e., to bolster declining enrollments), the resultant academic courses and student services may be less than appropriate. Equally disfunctional, and surely as financial at the core, is the use of tenured faculty whose fields are now less in demand or whose teaching capabilities have never been strong.

Solutions to these financial issues, as I see it, are not too dissimilar from those proposed for tackling political issues. Effective politicking on the part of educators might ensure, through adequate policy formulation, a permanent commitment by governments and institutions, on all levels, to foster the education of adults. With this kind of commitment, colleges and universities could move to equalize tuition rates for part-time and full-time credit on a proportionate, student-course-load basis. At the same time, provision should also be made to ensure eligibility of part-time students for all financial aid programs, including scholarships, loans, and outright grants.

Another level of political stress centers in the growing intrainstitutional concern over how to define areas of jurisdiction for professional schools and university extension programs, both in terms of administration and instruction. With the decline of regular students, the unclassified responsibilities of various departments and schools to serve the part-time student clientele contribute to continued tension and conflict. Such *internal* tension is further aggravated by the increasingly tense *external* competition with other colleges, universities, public school systems and community colleges for many of the same students. This kind of complex financial and political entanglement tends to distract administrators from establishing accurate priorities for the needs of adult learners, and it consumes educators' energy in the game of survival of the fittest.

In the face of budgetary restraints, the problem of financing the education of adults can be tackled through the pooling of resources of several institutions in the same region. The New England model[5] (and others) of collaborative planning to allocate programs and resources could be adapted. Such a cooperative approach has the additional side effect of fostering future regional efforts to respond to the growing needs of adult learners.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

The adaptation strategies described here and elsewhere show that it is possible to harness creativity and imagination to cope with new student constituencies. However, the statistics on the admission of adult learners into traditional, 4-year institutions of higher education, compared with the rapid enrollment growth in the community colleges, indicate that although we *have* attempted to adapt, our efforts, en bloc, have been inadequate.

We now have a golden opportunity to reexamine existing policies that have too long been taken for granted. Today's rapid social, economic, and technological changes will put us to the test; the ability to fulfill the egalitarian mandate of a new learning society under these changing conditions rests upon our concerted effort to develop new insights, devise fresh strategies, and execute bold ventures.

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II. AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM

Charlotte LeGates

PROGRAM HISTORY

Justin Morrill College (JMC) is one of the 17 colleges at Michigan State University. It was founded in 1965 as the first residential college within the University. The orginal curriculum stressed a very strong, broad background in the liberal arts and sciences and mandated an intensive language program and cross-cultural experience. Faculty emphasized individualized interaction with students—small classes, seminars, independent study—and most important, a flexible, individually designed "field of concentration," which stressed multidisciplinary work, and which replaced in the students' programs the concept of a traditional, discipline-focussed major. Faculty were recruited who emphasized teaching over research, and who desired work in a flexible, innovative arm of a major institution.

The innovations that the College introduced to Michigan State were many—the use of pass/no credit grading, the acceptability of interdisciplinary concentrations, the role of students in academdemic governance, the teaching of general education through disciplinary courses. The College experimented with team-teaching models, cluster courses, mini-courses, independent learning, and field experience. Many of these concepts were adopted by other units at MSU.

During the 1960's and early '70's, Justin Morrill attracted very highly motivated, individualistic students who used the flexible field of concentration to create unique programs centered on intellectual ideas and themes. Concentrations ranged from rather obvious combinations such as "Psychology in Literature" or "The Anthropological Foundations of Religion" to topics that in other institutions are regularized majors, such as "Aging" or "International Business Management," to topics that are generally reserved for graduate study, such as "Arts Management," "Dance Therapy," or "Student Personnel." For students whose grades and interviews warranted increased options, graduate as well as undergraduate courses could be included in these concentrations, and basic graduate-school requirements could be built in.

The general decline of interest in the liberal arts in the 1970's was reflected in decreased enrollment in Justin Morrill College. Consideration was given to dismantling the program, which no longer seemed to interest large numbers of students, and which proved increasingly expensive on a per-student basis. However, the College faculty believed that the program could prove extremely valuable in attracting the "lifelong" student to Michigan State University. As the only college on campus authorized to award a focussed major that could be composed of courses from different colleges, Justin Morrill was an invaluable resource in developing degree programs for non-traditional students. We could, we felt, build on the land-grant mission of Michigan State—the mission to bring practically oriented education to the entire population of the State, and to fulfill the emerging educational needs of that population.

But the question was, how could a group of faculty go about transforming their program from one serving primarily traditional-age students in a residential setting to one serving primarily older adults in the community, with needs entirely different from the needs of the 18-year-old, and with no reason at all to enroll themselves in a college that they did not perceive as meeting their needs?

Our original assets in developing this program included:

- The ability to grant a B.A. degree in any interdisciplinary field because of our ability to work individually with students who wanted to combine courses from several different colleges into unique majors;
- A faculty unafraid of innovation, aware of educational philosophy and current research, and schooled in the structure and political processes of the University;
- A faculty that included many unmarried individuals whose schedules were more flexible than those of many married individuals;
- The belief that there was a market within our community for non-traditional programs;
- A community that, because of its relatively small number of large employers, consists of sev-

eral fairly large and identifiable groups: state civil-service workers and legislative aides; workers in health industries; and workers in large industrial concerns.

But our liabilities included:

- A feeling on the part of many faculty members throughout the university that there was in fact no lifelong education market. Statistics from other states and institutions had little impact on many of the policymaking individuals at the university, who were convinced that older adults would not show up for programs.

- A weak commitment to lifelong education. So far as undergraduate degree-granting programs were concerned, this commitment existed only on paper. The development of a plan in 1973 to forge ahead in lifelong education, and the subsequent lack of action, had created a cynical attitude in many quarters on the commitment of the University to this concept.

- A constantly growing enrollment in the University. Michigan State has not suffered the decline in undergraduate enrollment that has hit some institutions, although enrollment patterns have drastically shifted. A debate exists within the University as to whether University resources should be directed toward fulfilling the needs of students, which the University has in the past ignored, whether the University should dip farther and farther into the pool of traditional-age undergraduates to maintain its enrollment during the years of decline in the population of 18-year-olds, or whether resources should be shifted into the professional and pre-professional programs that are currently popular with traditional-age students.

- The college's lack of identity as an institution that could and would deal with the needs of the new audience. Our image as a residential program for traditional-age students initially worked against serious examination of our proposals for degree programs for adults by both the potential students and other faculty members on campus.

- Our dependence on other units to help us develop new programs. Because the College does not administer its own field of concentration, but simply develops and certifies a concentration that consists of courses from other units, we could not act alone to institute an entire program.

- Knowledge that any new programs would have to be supported initially through an internal reallocation of human and fiscal resources rather than with new resources.

THE PILOT PROGRAM

Developing the Program

We decided to develop a pilot program in cooperation with a few other units, targeted at a specific group of potential students. We could not, we knew, develop a program that would suit all those students who did not currently attend college, but who might like to earn a degree given the right opportunity. But if we could persuade just a few other units to go along, we could, we decided, develop a program that would meet the needs of a few. A pilot program would generate little hostility within the University; it would take few resources, and those who expected that it would fail might actually welcome the opportunity to see the fullfillment of their prediction that there were no students. The cooperating units would not have to give long-range commitments, just one-shot commitments; and aiming at a specific population would limit our marketing costs.

The population we chose was the State of Michigan civil service workers. From the response to the previous program, we knew that many of them did not have bachelor's degrees and were being impeded in promotion because of this lack. In addition, we had had some contact during the development of a previous program with the head of personnel development for civil servants, who confirmed that the audience did exist.

Having decided on the students, we then had to develop a program to suit their needs. Obviously, the program would have to be conducted either very early in the morning, at night, or on weekends. We decided on nights. Second, the concept with which we had always worked—the flexible, individually designed field of concentration—would have to be considerably modified. Although night sections of courses are taught every term at Michigan State University, there is no pattern to the offerings, and no night degree-granting program had ever existed for its undergraduates. In only a very few cases are night sections guaranteed in a particular class; and the term in which the course is offered, as well as the days and times, are subject to change without notice. We could not possibly, we realized, bring night students into the University and help them develop

academically acceptable fields of concentration that also met their needs from the potpourri of irregularly scheduled courses offered by the University at night.

Thus, we developed the concept of the "pre-planned" field of concentration. We considered all of the regulations and guidelines that govern our development of fields of concentration with students on an individual basis, and played at being both student and faculty member. We asked ourselves, as civil service workers interested in a B.A. program, which courses at Michigan State we would put together to make an academically acceptable field of concentration.

Once we had identified areas that we could see as part of the most desirable field of concentration for these students, we had to make some modifications. Some of the courses we had identified were in the "impacted" colleges and departments of the University, units that did not have the resources, in some cases, to meet the needs of their current students in the way they would most like to meet them.

For this reason, we decided to concentrate on courses in units where enrollments were average or below average, units that could more easily accommodate a pilot audience. We developed a field of concentration utilizing courses from public affairs management in the Department of Agricultural Economics, from computer science, from mathematics, from communication, from economics, and from statistics. We decided that if we could get each department to agree to offer a night section of the courses we needed just once within the next 5 years, and if we could arrange those commitments in the right way, we could bring students into a pilot program that could guarantee them the opportunity to complete their degree requirements within that five-year period, exclusive of elective credit, which they would need to meet the all-University requirement of 180 credits for a B.A. degree.

Our most exciting discovery was that when individual department heads were asked to make a small contribution to a pilot program for night students, almost all agreed. While they felt that the audience a particular, discipline-focussed program could attract would be far too small to warrant the disruption of faculty routines and the hiring of additional night staff (advisers and secretaries), almost all were willing to contribute a little something. The sum of the little somethings was a pilot program. We learned an important lesson from this: by asking for a very limited and specific contribution to a program, and by demonstrating to a unit that it has nothing to lose—since night sections can always be filled by day students who like to do something between dinner and later evening recreation—a unit can put together a program that can be instituted within already established funding.

Our own faculty recognized the need for some modifications of our required courses for the night students. Courses that stressed problem analysis and solution, and group theory and skills, especially, had to be revamped for the new audience. We decided to offer sections of these courses at night, fitting them around the commitments we had gotten from other departments, with some modification of the usual course material.

Thus, within resources that already existed, and without displacing any other students, we created a pilot program for older students who could attend college at night. Our next task was to find out whether there really were students who wanted that kind of a program.

Recruiting the Pilot Audience

We began our recruiting by contacting an acquaintance who worked in civil-service personnel development, and asked him to announce the progjam in one of his bulletins. He went further than that, providing us with an auditorium in which to make what we thought would be the first of a series of presentations about the program to interested civil servants. But it turned out also to be the last meeting. We had designed the program for 30 to 50 students. At that first meeting, 250 people showed up, many representing groups in their offices. Since we could not possibly have handled all 250 students, had they all decided to enroll, we ended the advertising of the program immediately.

A total of 75 students were admitted in the pilot program, but only about 40 enrolled the first term. Eventually the pilot program grew to about 60 students in total, about 40 of whom were enrolled at any one time. This was within our resources. We had, however, made one major error in the planning of our program; we had assumed that almost all students interested would be those who had little college behind them, or at most an A.A. degree. In fact, the typical student was a

late junior, a student who had dropped out of school in the 50's or 60's, taken a job, married, started a family, and now wished to have some way to complete a college education. We discovered students who had accumulated vast numbers of credits—one had 255 from 5 different institutions—but who had never completed the requirements for any one program.

Lessons from the Pilot Program

(1) Students who wanted a night program were all adults in transition, wanting to move up significantly in the departments in which they held jobs, or wanting to break into middle or upper management from lower-level technical or first-level supervisory jobs.

(2) Most did not want a degree only for the job transition it might help them achieve, but also for the psychological feeling of achievement. Our oldest student, for instance, was somewhat embarrassed about the fact that he hired people to work under him only if they held master's degrees or higher, whereas he did not have a B.A.

(3) The students were willing to take almost any program, so long as it was offered at night. This was in keeping with national studies that report that time of day and convenience are extremely important factors in older students' choice of academic programs.

(4) Most students already had significant starts on majors that they could not finish because of lack of availability of their original program at night. However, in many cases, the students' interests had developed significantly beyond the original major; and while many continued to use skills and knowledge gained from their major in their job, they were often interested in taking a different slant on their future education.

THE PERMANENT PROGRAM

Developing the Permanent Program

The most serious modification that we found we needed to make in the second, and permanent, version of our program was a reduction in credits required within the College, and an increase in credits required in the major. These students needed more emphasis on liberalizing their main areas of study, and less on generalizing their basic knowledge beyond the general-education requirement of the University. Thus, the Justin Morrill faculty reworked its core courses, omitting elements which seemed less than relevant to this audience—like field experience—and condensing its decision-making core into fewer credits.

Developing permanent, pre-planned fields of concentration for night students was easier than anticipated. People already knew that some units could be included in the new program without additional expenditure of resources, and that those contributions had been viewed favorably by central administration, which had finally been able to follow through on a pledge given to this audience several years before. The only unit that had refused to participate in the pilot program turned out to be very eager to sign on for the permanent program; and one of the chairpersons from an "impacted" area, whom we had been extremely hesitant to call, called us and suggested how her unit could contribute.

The Program as Instituted

A permanent version of the night program has now been approved and is enrolling its first students. There are two "pre-planned" fields of concentration—one in public policy, the other in society and law. Together, they consist of courses from fourteen different departments throughout Michigan State, departments which were generally happy to contribute to the program since they did not have to disrupt their programs or budgets to do so. All of the courses required for the degree are offered at least once every two years, so that students who need, roughly, their junior and senior years of work to complete their degrees are able to do so in four years of half-time study at night.

The College is also able to work individually with some students who have a large number of courses from a major acquired during a previous college career, who need less than two years of full-time work to complete the minimum number of credits required for the B.A., and who are interested in building on their past experience to change the direction of their major area of study. Since there are a few units that offer many courses regularly at night, since a variety of courses are guaranteed to be offered at night from the two pre-planned fields of concentration,

and since a few students are able to get released time or flexible time from work for a few terms, we can work with these students to develop fields of concentration that are unique to them. For example, the former journalism major who now works in public relations for the State government can change the focus of his major to communications in public policy, supplementing the journalism credits with courses from communications, advertising, English, and political science, to earn a degree that will signify a body of knowledge useful in job performance, understanding,and advancement.

Both the pre-planned and flexible fields of concentration conform to the following guidelines:*

(1) Must form a coherent pattern of courses in a clearly defined area of study.

(2) Should ensure that the student studies some part of the area in depth.

(3) May include any undergraduate course at MSU, if that course is known to be available to Justin Morrill students. Except for Honors College students, departmental prerequisites must be met.

(4) Must be multidisciplinary and inter-college: i.e., it must include courses within at least two separate colleges at Michigan State University, in addition to Justin Morrill.

(5) Must include at least three credits of work specifically integrating the various disciplines involved.

(6) Must include at least 50 credits, at least 40 of which must be at the 300 or 400 level. Exceptions will be made in those few areas which require junior- or senior-level work at the 200 level.

(7) May include up to five credits of internship, where appropriate. Additional credits of internship must be taken in addition to the 50 required credits.

(8) May include up to 10 credits of work within Justin Morrill.

(9) Must be approved by the Justin Morrill Curriculum Committee.

(10) Should not duplicate departmental or college majors available elsewhere in the University.

In addition, the Justin Morrill faculty has developed a series of five courses to supplement the students' fields of concentration and enable them to translate more theoretical knowledge into components that make them more competent in their jobs and more productive as community members. These courses are:

JMC 299, "Perspectives on Higher Education"—examines a variety of points of view on the meaning of higher education in American society, the role and function of the university, the ways in which philosophies and theories of education influence the structure and resources of the university, the benefits of university education, and the ways in which students may best use their university educations in light of their own educational philosophies, needs, and goals.

JMC 390, "Problem Analysis"—allows students to master generalizable skills of analysis and to apply them to a variety of problems. Like 391 and 392, the course emphasizes skills necessary in the decision-making process, including the integration function of solution-generation.

JMC 391, "Societal Issues and Values"—emphasizes the role of the personal values in the decisions an individual makes, and the role of value conflicts and resolutions in the making of social and political decisions. Students will be asked to relate personal value judgments to larger patterns of thought (i.e., political, philosophical, psychological, scientific) and to apply value-centered analyses and arguments to specific topics.

JMC 392, "Theory and Practice of Group Interaction"—allows students to improve their own functioning in groups, to understand the potential of group interaction, and to learn to direct groups toward productive ends. The group as a primary tool in the decision-making process is emphasized.

JMC 310, "Writing for Prelaw Students," or *JMC 410,* "Writing: Style and Technique"—asks the student to improve expository writing skills (organization, mechanics, and style) to a level more closely approximating that of professional-level writing. Emphasis is placed on the skills needed in light of students' post-college goals.

JMC 497, "Senior Project," or *JMC 498,* "Senior Thesis" allows students to demonstrate that they are able to apply the skills, knowledge and perspectives of their fields of concentration, their general education, and their Justin Morrill College core courses to a problem-focussed project or thesis. Students are asked not only to develop a project or research paper that addresses an important societal problem, but also to analyze how they have used their skills and knowledge in the analysis and solution (real or potential) of the problem and to assess the effectiveness of their application of skills and

*The following excerpts are taken from Justin Morrill's *Program Planning Handbook.*

knowledge in light of their personal goals. The senior project or thesis is intended as a capstone experience for B.A.-level students, demanding an integration of their educations through application. It makes explicit the potential that their educational experiences have created by taking knowledge and skills back into society and the community.

The Future in Justin Morrill College

In the future, Justin Morrill College plans to develop additional pre-planned fields of concentration, which will enable us to offer more opportunities for students who need the individually designed fields. The entire program might be translated into another time frame, such as early mornings or weekends. And as our student population grows, we may be able to work with other units to add services and facilities for this new audience; these could include special counselling groups, more specialized advising, and child-care services.

MOVING THE IDEA TO ANOTHER CAMPUS

What is needed to translate this idea onto another campus? The first thing is to discover where there is a flexible major in an institution or unit. It may be hiding under a name that doesn't seem too flexible, but it is probably there. "General science," "humanities," or "social science" majors may allow for flexibilities such as the including a section of courses from another area, requirements phrased in terms of a minimum number of credits in an area, rather than specific courses in that area, or a very wide range of choice for students. Majors that require both choice and courses from several different units are natural starting places.

The second requirement is a small group of faculty—perhaps only two or three—with some connection to the major identified, and with willingness to entertain the idea of working with a new audience. In Justin Morrill, the pilot program was developed by four faculty members working approximately one-eighth time on the program for two terms, and one administrator working approximately one-quarter time for three terms. When the pilot group was admitted, one of the faculty members worked as the advisor for this group for about one-eighth of his time; he was not given released time, but assumed this responsibility in addition to his regular teaching assignments. The permanent outline of the program was worked out in a shorter period of time, with five faculty members working approximately one-quarter time, and one administrator working three-quarters time on the program for one ten-week term.

The small group of faculty and the identified major are the only essential requirements. The rest is a matter of making choices and persevering. Identify a likely audience within a 50-mile radius of campus. A survey is helpful but not essential; common sense and statistics from other programs in areas like yours are good guides. Second, look at the major as if you were a student from this audience coming into the program. Given the limits and the choices involved, what is the most desirable set of courses you would like to take?

Then contact the heads of the units offering the courses. Do they ever offer this particular course at night? If not, why not? Do they think their faculty would be willing to offer it at night once every two years or so? Are there inducements other than financial ones that could be offered to the faculty involved? In general, both department heads and faculty in disciplines in which enrollments have been falling will jump at the chance to offer their courses to a new audience, especially when they can do it without taking over a lot of administrative problems themselves, and when they can teach only occasionally at night, not constantly. There may occasionally be an insurmountable obstacle; in that case, one simply redesigns the program.

Arranging for student services at night (such as registration, enrollment adjustments, and advising) may prove more difficult on some campuses than others. Initially, some enrollment procedures may have to be done by hand. A few clerical staff members may have to be asked to stay late; but if contracts permit, they could be repaid in released time rather than in overtime pay. Do not underestimate the willingness of clerical staff members to help the units for which they work; they understand the difficulties of too few students, and are often more than willing to put extra effort into helping build enrollments. Appeal to self-interest: the unmarried secretary in her late 20's is far more likely to meet interesting and suitable men by working at night with non-traditional students than she is by working during the day with 18-year-olds.

The small group of faculty members who decide to take on this task will be faced with problems and challenges. Who is going to do evening orientation and when? How do we work with

students who need to late-drop a course? Can we arrange an interview for a student after hours with a financial aid officer? Despite the problems, the rewards, both personal and professional, are great. The students you meet are very different from the traditional-age student, and they present new challenges. You become involved with a different group of faculty members from the ones you may be used to working with. And there is a real sense of accomplishment and pride when the first students enroll, when they thank you for giving them the opportunity to come back to school without giving up their jobs, when they get promoted because going back to school has given them both new confidence and new skills, and when they finally graduate. Interested and willing faculty at even the most tradition-bound institutions of higher education can develop programs for the new audience of older students in transition; and it is worth doing.

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III. A COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAM

Mary Jim Josephs

THE PROBLEM

Degree programs for nontraditional students must accommodate certain special needs of this audience:

- Flexible time scheduling to allow for various patterns of work hours;
- Flexible program scheduling, especially in relation to a major knowledge area, to allow for individual student backgrounds and personal/professional goals;
- Credit, or other acknowledgment toward a degree, for previously acquired learning and/or for learning accomplished outside of academic settings;
- A level of maturity, in content and style, of required experiences commensurate with the expectations of a sophisticated adult audience;
- The possibility of assuming personal responsibility and initiative for one's education.

Competency-based degree programs correspond uniquely to these special needs. While they set high exit-level standards for a degree, such programs allow great flexibility in content and in the means for meeting those standards. The student does much of the required work independently, thus easing the strain of time schedules. And academic advising and assessments can be accommodated to individual schedules far more easily than classes or other large group experiences.

The following will explain what a competency-based program is, how it can speak to the unique set of needs of nontraditional students, and how such an approach corresponds to the institutional need to create programs to recruit and retain nontraditional students.

COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMS AS COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

In recent years competency-based education, an approach that structures the learning and the credentialling processes around competencies established as fundamental for successful performance after graduation, has gained wide acceptance. This movement began in educational programs that prepared people for careers in education, engineering, nursing and the technological fields, where the specific knowledge and skills essential to professional success could be fairly easily stated. These programs of study have tended to be highly content-specific and focused on professional knowledge and skills, rather than on the more generic capabilities fostered by a liberal education.

In more recent years, educators have made an effort to apply what has been learned in competency-based professional programs to the development of the harder-to-delineate liberal arts program. In this effort, they have defined, in terms of competencies, the desired outcomes of a liberal education. The competencies, or broadly stated abilities, establish a structure for requiring not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the ability to use that knowledge and to understand the personal and social value of knowledge and its uses. Because of this emphasis on use and understanding, most competency-based liberal arts programs include, along with a major knowledge area, some non-disciplinary areas such as values clarification, decisionmaking, problem solving, group interaction skills, critical thinking or analysis, and integrating among the required areas for competency demonstration. The student can demonstrate competence in these areas through the medium of any specific content material. At the same time, when viewed within the framework of a liberal education these areas are recognized as separate but essential complements to the academic disciplines, and even as long-range, desired outcomes of disciplinary studies.

A competency-based degree program differs from a traditional degree program in a variety of ways, but not in its intended outcomes. Each type of program is designed to provide a liberal education, yet the components vary from the earliest stages of planning.

In general, when traditional, course-based liberal arts programs are planned, educators are asked what experiences drawn from their disciplinary specialty they consider essential to the development of the educated person. Each plans a block of required experiences, which are put together, and the program or whole set of experiences is judged for its depth, breadth and general

balance within the disciplines. There is most often a general education component of such a program, usually framed as a distribution requirement, calling for a basic, broad knowledge in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. To this is added depth and breadth of knowledge in a specific major area (and perhaps in an additional minor area), sometimes accompanied by some professional training experiences and usually completed by elective courses.

Such a program is process oriented and is planned with an image of the student as a recent high school graduate, for whom one structures learning experiences designed to facilitate the acquisition, analysis and integration of knowledge. The process itself is highly valued, and course planning frequently focuses more clearly on a desired process considered important to the intellectual development of students than on desired outcomes. To the extent that outcomes are explicitly specified, the emphasis is usually on "knowing," as that term is variously defined by each of the contributing disciplines. Degree requirements are stated in terms of the number and disciplinary distribution of courses (or learning experiences or processes) within a framework of prescribed time and sequence of these experiences. Records are kept on the number of these courses (through credits) and the quality of participation and amount of learning accomplished (through grades). The assessment or evaluation process is combined with the teaching process and becomes part of the learning process unit, or course. The role of the teacher in such a model is an open one, with wide latitude for personal definition; but frequently the teacher is perceived as a presenter and interpreter of knowledge, a judge of student performance and a role model for a disciplinary perspective.

A competency-based program is conceived and planned from the opposite direction. The exit rather than the entry-level student is envisaged, and the competencies (frequently broken down into skills, depth and breadth of knowledge and awareness of values) that must be demonstrated for degree certification are defined. A group of faculty members agree upon a set of competencies as representing the intended goals of a liberal education, stated in terms of what the student should know and be able to do. This may be a relatively simple matter of adopting and adapting a previously established set of competencies, or a laborious undertaking that begins with the rethinking of their individual philosophies of education. Once a set of competency statements is agreed upon, the major division of these competency areas, or sub-competency statements, are formulated. Next comes the development of performance objectives, statements that indicate what a student must be able to *do* in order to demonstrate the abilities called for in the competency and sub-competency statements. Last comes the formulation of the assessment procedures, which set the exact means and standards by which the assessor judges the student's performance in the tasks through which competencies are demonstrated.

At this stage of development a certification process will have been created, through which credentials can be awarded. If a full curriculum is desired, rather than just a degree certification procedure, the next step is to begin to develop courses that will support, but not supplant, the degree requirements, which are simply the demonstration of all the competencies. Whether or not a curriculum is developed, the competency-based program has as one of its features a separation of the learning process from the assessment or certification process, a separation of teacher from assessor. While the student will learn through a good examination or assessment procedure in either a traditional or competency-based program, the competency-based program does establish these as two separate phases of student activity, and it gives responsibility to different persons for planning and monitoring the two phases.

Since the competency-based program is goal- or outcome-oriented, assessments are usually based on a product (although some assessments must be based on a process, e.g., an oral presentation to demonstrate oral competency, and participation in a group to demonstrate group-interaction skills). The program is planned with an image of the exit-level, liberally educated student, for whom one structures assessment procedures that allow for the demonstration of competencies which include knowledge, skills, awareness of values, and the integration and application of these components. The emphasis is usually on the student's ability to acquire and to apply knowledge as much as it is on the depth and breadth of knowledge acquired. Degree requirements are stated in terms of the competencies to be demonstrated, without regard for the time, place or sequence of learning. Records are kept on the competency demonstrations and the quality of performance in the required areas, in accord with criteria established in the assessment procedures.

The role of the teacher in such a model is frequently that of a non-judgmental facilitator of learning—a planner of learning experiences, with the judgments on that learning assigned to an

assessor. In a competency-based program there is less stress on the disciplinary divisions of knowledge and more on the intended long-range uses of knowledge. Courses are a means of developing competencies, which are assessed and certified through separate procedures. Advising takes on much more importance than in a traditional program because the student needs guidance through a structure that requires much personal initiative and independent work.

ADVANTAGES OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAM FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Competency-based education is an attempt to reexamine and to restructure education in terms of clearly defined objectives. While it sets high standards for performance, this approach maintains maximum flexibility for the student in relation to time commitments and subject matter requirements, and maximum flexibility for the institution in the way it uses its resources. In addition, the competency concept calls for a breakdown of the distance between the ivory tower and the world beyond, and it establishes a line of continuity between academic training and the professional and societal roles that students expect to assume. The key component in this line of continuity is the formulation of educational objectives in terms of the knowledge and skills required in those professional and societal roles.

Because the competency approach awards degrees on the basis of demonstrated ability rather than on the basis of curriculum requirements, it allows for the credentialling of learning acquired outside academic settings, a factor of great significance to non-traditional students. Furthermore, the greater flexibility of individualized programming allows for the accommodation of the work schedules of employed adults. These two special problems—the need for acknowledgment of prior learning and the need for special scheduling—have posed the most visible obstacles for the older student who wishes to benefit from the learning opportunities and the credentials offered by a university. Such students cannot come to the university until these obstacles have been overcome or substantially diminished. And yet this potential audience finds itself increasingly pressured, by the tight job market, by uninteresting and low-status professional situations, and by the basic need for personal and professional growth, to seek ways of availing itself of the university's services.

Competency-based education is not proposed here as the single approach appropriate to the development of degree programs for nontraditional students. To the contrary, this author's most basic assumption about such programs is that a range of approaches is necessary to correspond to the many ways that older students differ from each other—because of the vast possibilities of life experience and because they have developed individualized styles of learning and of assimilating knowledge. What is proposed is that a competency-based program is an economically and educationally sound addition to existing programs, which can most effectively serve a certain segment of the non-traditional audience.

Some of the characteristics of this group are: an unusual ability to transform experience into knowledge and understanding; a tendency to work and learn independently, and the intellectual curiosity to delve deeply into the chosen subject matter; work experiences that have cultivated personal and intellectual growth and conferred leadership positions; and a very high level of motivation to achieve. The following individual cases may clarify what kind of person needs and deserves a competency-based program.

Situation 1—Student A is an interior designer in her late forties. She learned her profession on an apprentice model, working with an accomplished professional whom she respected deeply. Her experiential learning was supplemented by independent study as she prepared herself to take the certifying examinations of the American Institute of Design (examinations which currently cannot be taken by anyone not holding a B.A. degree). Having passed the exams, A went into business for herself, working mainly in the field of institutional design. She read widely in the fields of history, art and architecture, as well as in her own professional field. She donated her services to community needs like the planning and building of an art center. When Student A wanted new professional challenges, she took a job with a large university, where she rapidly became the head interior designer. Working in this new milieu, she began to realize that the people she worked with as peers and even those she supervised all had B.A. degrees, and many held more advanced credentials. She wanted to earn a degree, but did not want to give up her rewarding position for several years to do so.

Through a competency-based program, A was able to earn a degree in two years while continuing in her full-time position. She demonstrated a major knowledge area (equivalent in depth and breadth to that expected of a B.A.-level student in a traditional degree program) in the field of interior design through a major project, which was the documentation of the design job she had done in a recently constructed faculty club at the university. After the project materials were assembled and a lengthy paper written (describing the problems addressed, approaches taken, hypotheses, methods of inquiry, conclusions, bibliography and other sources of information), there was a final assessment panel (held at the club) and attended by two professors from the Design Department at the university, a local designer in professional practice, an oral-competency assessor (who was assessing A on one of the required communications sub-competencies) and two staff members from the competency-based degree program. The two design professors certified A's knowledge in the major field, based on the project, the assessment panel and their knowledge of A's professional work.

Student A demonstrated a minor knowledge area in the history of architecture through a fifty-page paper done independently and certified by a history professor. She demonstrated the skills of community involvement by documenting her work with the group that set up an art center. Through an autobiography she demonstrated the skills of values clarification and the ability to integrate and apply her knowledge and skills. A range of sub-competency areas (various forms of communications skills, group interaction skills, and knowledge of contemporary events) were demonstrated through tests and/or through papers or oral presentations related to the other large competency demonstrations. All assessments were done by faculty qualified in the relevant professional area, and approximately fifteen faculty members did assessments of A's work before her final certification for the degree.

Situation 2—Student B, now in his early fifties, was a police officer who had served for 21 years in the greater New York area, specializing in juvenile crime. In his early forties, after a divorce, he looked around for a major career change possibility. He went into government foreign service and spent three years as a civilian police adviser in South Vietnam, then four years as a public safety adviser in Thailand. During this stay in Southeast Asia, B became very interested in local customs and in the historical culture of the people, as contrasted with his own cultural values. He read extensively and, because of unusually strong communications skills, interacted with many Vietnamese and Thai people. Upon leaving Southeast Asia and government service, B wrote an end-of-tour report, which is still used by the agency as a model of the style and analysis expected in such reports. B accepted a position in state government in the midwest as an administrator of federal and state grants to local communities for the operation of local police departments. In this role he influenced these local departments to build crime prevention plans into their proposals, which resulted in substantial reduction of the crime rate in these communities. B decided that he wanted to earn a B.A. degree for professional and personal growth and to expand his career options, and he had few credits acceptable toward the degree.

B was able to demonstrate a major knowledge area in the cultural basis of political conflict, which was based on an extensive study of the Vietnam War. He demonstrated a minor knowledge area in police administration through the crime prevention strategy he developed in his work as grant administrator. His community involvement project was based on his volunteer work in setting up neighborhood crime patrols. These competency areas were documented with the care indicated in the case of Student A, and the competency demonstrations were assessed and certified by the appropriate faculty. The range of other sub-competencies were demonstrated in ways similar to those described for Student A.

In addition to its uses as the basis for a whole degree program, a competency model can also be used to develop academically sound assessment procedures for giving non-traditional students credit for prior knowledge and advanced placement when they enter or re-enter regular degree programs. In both of these uses of the competency approach, the student benefits from a model that can provide individual programming for special needs, and the institution benefits from a model that cuts against stale transcripts and assures high academic standards whenever a student enters or returns to the educational system. And in both cases competency-based education serves as the link which connects potential students who would other wise be unable to continue their education to existing university resources which might other wise be underutilized.

CONCLUSION

Institutions have long been puzzled about how to deal equitably with non-traditional learners. On the one hand, it is not fair to expect them to go through the exact program planned for recent high school graduates; on the other hand, it is equally inappropriate to risk demeaning the reputation of the institution's credentials by awarding them through any procedure that does not assure the same academic standards set for other programs. Since the institution does not control the processes through which non-traditional students have acquired learning, it is extremely important to control the standards and the procedures through which that learning is monitored and certified.

On a long-range basis, when efficient structures have been established for competency assessment, this approach should be economical for both the institution and the student because the institution will be required to provide and the student will be required to pay for the necessary assessment and teaching services, but not for the full range of teaching services necessary for students in a traditional program. In addition, the competency assessment and professional advising can be done by faculty with relevant qualifications who continue to function in other degree programs within the institution. A competency-based program can be developed and administered by a relatively small group of faculty who adapt and coordinate the professional expertise of the whole pool of available faculty of the institution in order to secure the advising and assessment services necessary to the successful operation of the program. Students avail themselves of the same supportive services (e.g., library, counseling center, placement office, financial aid) that are necessary for students in other programs. Thus, in a period of protracted financial stress, a competency model allows the institution to meet its commitment to non-traditional students within a context of flexible and maximum use of university resources.

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TOWARD A BALANCED SET OF PROGRAMS FOR ADULT STUDENTS

Charlotte LeGates

Since adult students present an even more diverse set of needs than traditional-age students, no one adult program, no matter how well conceived, can possibly fulfill the needs of a majority of adult students returning to college. Curricular development for adult students must emphasize the development of a diverse set of programs to meet these needs.

The two programs outlined in these papers, administered through the same college, begin to offer this diversity. They were developed for two distinct groups of adult students, but were conceived and implemented by the same faculty members, almost all of whom were originally recruited into their present positions to work with traditional-age students in a residential setting. However, because the development of programs for adults contributed to fulfilling one of the primary traditional objectives of the college—the development of innovative programs which would deal with students as unique individuals—the faculty was able to develop the two distinctly different, liberalizing curricula within the context of their educational philosophies.

Program Overlap

Two major areas of similarity between the two programs have allowed them to grow from each other and mark them as having been developed by the same faculty. These are the concept of the field of concentration/major knowledge area, and the emphasis in both programs on the development of decision-making and communications skills.

The flexible field of concentration had been a Justin Morrill College curricular innovation from the time of the founding of the College. Faculty members worked individually with each student to put together courses from many different University departments to form an area of study that made sense both for academic achievement and for the student's future. The concentrations thus developed were not bound by traditional disciplinary concepts, but were often problem-focussed. In the Competency-Based Program the concept of the "major knowledge area" as an interdisciplinary, problem-focussed study grew naturally from the "field of concentration" idea. The faculty had already worked with students who built areas of inquiry around major social problems such as energy, rehabilitation,

aging, and public welfare. The delineation of competence statements developed for the major knowledge area, then, naturally avoided purely disciplinary considerations and accommodated students who had developed knowledge areas through working on related problems over a period of years.

The success of the major-knowledge-area concept in winning the loyalty and interest of students encouraged the faculty to retain the model of the interdisciplinary, problem-centered area of major inquiry in developing the flexible field of concentration for the interdisciplinary, credit-based program for adults at Justin Morrill. Students in this program may assemble courses that contribute toward solving a problem rather than having to demonstrate that knowledge through assessment, but the basic idea is the same. Thus, all Justin Morrill College students have the opportunity to help define and develop their areas of study—which take the position of the "major" in most traditional programs.

The second area of major overlap between the two programs is the emphais on decision-making and communications skills. Justin Morrill College traditionally had a strong, well-defined writing program that formed the core of a series of innovative freshman programs, most of which were designed to add various decision-making and other communications skills to students' writing skills. Problem-solving, values clarification, group interaction, and oral communication became perennial components of the various freshman programs. Thus, it was natural for the faculty to think of those particular learning and interactive skills when fleshing out basic competence statements in communications and decision-making. Requirements for proficiency in written and spoken English, in problem solving and applying an understanding of values, and efficacy in individual and in group settings, became a part of the Competency-Based Program.

Encouragement to retain these emphases in the Credit-Based Interdisciplinary Program was fostered by a growing awareness on the part of the faculty that the skills we had been working with in several different settings were, in fact, vital to productive adult functioning. Students in the Competency-Based Program were able to demonstrate these skills by applying them to problems they faced in their often complex careers, and in settings in which they had to function competently on a daily basis. Since the new adult interdisciplinary population could not, appropriately, be expected to develop these skills in a freshman program, a series of junior-level courses, generally dealing with contemporary problems, was created to focus on skill development.

With these two common bases, it is possible that the faculty will develop ways to integrate the two programs, so that students who are capable of earning some competency assessments on entering or re-entering college might earn part of a degree in this format, and part in a credit-based, more traditional format. However, there is a basic philosophical difference between the two programs that has yet to be overcome. The Competency-Based Program focusses entirely on outcomes and goals, while the Interdisciplinary, Credit-Based Program focusses on the individual academic components of a degree and the process through which they are assembled. Some members of the faculty are currently attempting to reconcile these two philosophies in order to develop a program that would meet the needs of students capable of some competency demonstration based on past acquisition of knowledge, but not of completing an entire Competency Program.

Student Clientele for the Two Programs

The Justin Morrill College Competency-Based and Interdisciplinary Programs serve students who have full-time careers and who generally have at least half the credits necessary for a bachelor's degree. The similarity generally ends there. Competency students tend to be older than Interdisciplinary students and have almost always achieved significant career advancement and recognition. Interdisciplinary students tend, on the other hand, to be stuck in their careers in clerical or first-line supervisory positions and to be prohibited from further advancement because of the lack of a degree. It is significant that this lack of a degree generally has not affected the advancement of Competency students, most of whom have made such significant achievements in lower level positions that they have been promoted in spite of their lack of a "required" credential.

The successful Competency students demonstrate the ability to continue achieving over a long period of time through self-direction and motivation. They do not need the structure of the classroom, regular assignments with due dates, and the term-by-term procession through requirements. In some cases, Competency students have wholly rejected such formal structures in their learning

settings, and they often cite this rejection as the reason for not having completed the degree previously. Interdisciplinary students, on the other hand, seem to require more structure and regular assignments. Given the opportunity to study independently, they sometimes succeed but often fail to maintain the drive and motivation necessary to acquire entirely new knowledge of their own. They are generally successful, however, in developing academic projects that are directly related to their careers or to the next level of promotion open to them.

Data is thus far limited to information on the 30 students admitted to the Competency Program and the 84 students admitted to the Interdisciplinary Program. No significant correlations have yet emerged between students who are doing well in the programs, or who have graduated, and sex, race, or prior grade-point averages. Individual motivation factors seem far more important in both programs than do past academic records. One interesting correlation discovered in the Competency Program, however, has been the suggestion of a link between success on the Educational Testing Service's Listening Test (Form 1B) and ability to complete other assessments with few failures.

Admissions requirements for the two programs have, of course, been distinctly different. Interdisciplinary students have had to meet the basic entrance requirements for Michigan State freshmen. Students with less successful academic records are required to take a battery of special tests in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to demonstrate their ability to do freshman-level work. In practice, most students in the Interdisciplinary Program have been students readmitted to Michigan State after a number of years of absence, and few Michigan residents over age 30 have ever been refused admission to the University.

Competency admissions requirements have been far more stringent, and they have depended on thorough committee assessment of extensive dossiers in addition to various test scores. After the assessment, admissions recommendations from this committee have been reviewed by the Michigan State University Admissions Office. Admitted candidates have generally demonstrated achievements in areas similar to academic areas of knowledge, so that they have had a solid basis on which to build the demonstration of competence in at least two of the three project areas (major, minor, and community involvement).

Administration Considerations

The combination of the two programs in one college has greatly encouraged faculty development. Faculty have spent significant amounts of time acquiring new skills and developing new specializations to meet the needs of courses emphasizing decision-making skills and assessments requiring expert judgments in a particular area. And faculty both within and outside of Justin Morrill have reacted very favorably to the challenge of adapting their traditional areas of expertise to the requirements of competence assessment.

The most serious administrative problem faced by those attempting to integrate the two programs, however, has been the difference in the reporting of faculty effort and costs and the recording of student progress toward a degree required of the two programs. The Interdisciplinary Program presents no problems, since all procedures are entirely within the normal reporting systems (credit hours per FTE, credits earned per term) of a university. But faculty effort in the Competency-Based Program cannot be measured so simply. The reporting and recording systems used during the pilot phase—students pay for "independent study" credits in the assessor's department—cannot be used for a permanent version of the program, as they do not accurately reflect either faculty or student effort.

In summary, then, the development of two distinctly different programs to serve the needs of two separate adult audiences has worked well within the context of a single college. Faculty members have reacted very favorably to the opportunity to use basic disciplinary skills in different academic settings with different types of students. Even though administrative considerations need further work, the faculty is currently at work imagining other new programs that could meet the needs of new audiences of adult students and at the same time preserve some of the traditional benefits of individualized programs for traditional-age students.

The fact that such different programs can live in harmony with each other, not only within a complex and diverse university, but also within the same small administrative unit, should be further encouragement to those who wish to develop specialized programs within the context of a large institution.

IV. AN EXPERIMENT IN UNBUNDLING SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Joseph P. O'Neill

"Unbundling" may sound like the reverse of an old New England courting custom. But, in more prosaic fact, the term has come into common use in antitrust cases against such large and well-known companies as IBM, Eastman Kodak, and the New York Stock Exchange. Each of these firms once engaged in a pricing practice called a "tie in." When a customer bought one product, he also had to buy other services or products which, though functionally separate, were tied into the main purchase. There was a time, for example, when you could not buy IBM's hardware without buying its software, or Kodak film without also paying for its development. Until recently, when you paid the transaction fees for the purchase of stock, you also paid for a whole set of research and custodial services whether you wanted them or not. In each of these cases, the firms were forced to "unbundle"; i.e., to list a separate price for each of the services or products that had been previously offered under a single price, because the "tie in" or bundled pricing system favored monopoly.

This paper will look into similar pricing practices in higher education; not because they are illegal under the antitrust act—they aren't—but because the traditional ways of charging tuition have fostered a system of services that is not responsive to the needs of adult students. In fact, it sometimes cheats both the student and the taxpayer who subsidizes higher education.

Institutions of higher education are just becoming aware that the principles of consumer protection apply as equally to them as to IBM, Eastman Kodak, or the New York Stock Exchange. Until quite recently, colleges and universities have been relatively immune from criticism about their advertising, pricing policies and end products. There are clear signs, however, that this immunity is beginning to fade. Both state and federal agencies are beginning to question how the enormous taxpayer subsidy to higher education is being administered. More significantly, the consumer—the student—is beginning to ask questions about the equity of tuition schedules that reflect the practices of an earlier age.

This paper will deal with a particular issue of consumer protection—the question of equity for part-time and evening students in the tuition charges they pay. Although it is a relatively narrow question, it raises a profound one: how should colleges and universities go about the task of serving the working adult in the lifelong task of learning?

THE UNIT PRICE SYSTEM AND THE PART-TIME STUDENT

In the past decade and a half, the role and place of continuing education for working adults has undergone a major change. The number of persons over 25 years of age enrolled in formal programs of instruction has almost doubled from 7.8 percent of the eligible population in 1957 to 13.3 percent in 1975. (The number of participants in adult education in 1975 was 17.1 million, with 3.3 million attending a four-year college or university).

Despite this enormous influx of part-time adult students, colleges have maintained pricing systems that tend to discriminate against the working adult. College tuition structures are almost universally based on a unit price, which includes not only classroom instruction, but a whole range of services including academic and personal counseling, social and athletic programs, and the use of laboratories, libraries, and computer facilities.

The unit-price system is reasonable and equitable if it is assumed that all students are going to college full-time and have the option of making use of all the campus resources. However, with the advent of great numbers of part-time, mature students, the fairness of the unit price system must be called into question. Students who attend class in the evening or at off-peak hours frequently find that there is a significant decrease in the availability of academic advisement, counseling, job placement and other support services that the unit price entitles them to. More important, most working adult students would be uninterested in extra curricular activities and support services even if they were available. In sum, the uniform per-credit-hour pricing system charges the mature student for services he neither wants not gets.

Aside from this inequity, obsolescence of the unit price system reflects a fundamental reality

about college and university support services. Colleges are basically geared up to serve youths in late adolescence. Despite their disclaimers, colleges still act *in loco parentis* to the 18-22-year-olds on their campuses. Enormous expenditures of time and money go into making the college a surrogate family—as evidenced by fraternities, sororities, and house-mother and father figures. But the support services required to create a surrogate family for the traditional student are needed only on a *selective* basis by the non-traditional student. Even then, such services are often inappropriate, both in substance and in tone, to the needs of mature adults.

Equity for part-time students, then, involves more than tinkering with an existing tuition schedule. A new pricing system that "unbundles" the services provided by the traditional credit hour charge requires thinking through *what* services part-time students want and need. A change in the present unit-price system will require re-structuring the services themselves.

"UNBUNDLING" IN THEORY*

Rather than making a comprehensive list of the many services offered by colleges and universities, I shall break the most common services down into two lists: core services that relate directly to instruction, and peripheral services that, though not directly related to instruction, ordinarily form part of the total package.

Core Services
(1) Assessment of prior learning
(2) Academic advisement
(3) Direct instruction
(4) Assessment of direct instruction
(5) Certification

Peripheral Services
(1) Career counseling
(2) Psychological/personal counseling
(3) Athletics
(4) Extra-curricular activities
(5) Financial aid
(6) Housing and meals
(7) Job placement
(8) Library and computer facilities

Except for housing and meals, these services are not usually offered to students in an unbundled fashion—i.e., with a separate price tag for each. The services come as part of a total package. Even though a service (such as academic advising or certification) may be a specialized function, generally a student cannot purchase it from a college or university.

I use the term "generally" advisedly, since some forms of unbundling have been going on for decades. (Like the parvenu in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who was surprised to learn he had been speaking prose all his life, we have been unbundling without thinking of it that way.)

A longstanding example of unbundling is the use of such functionally specialized organizations as the College Board, Educational Testing Service, and American College Testing Program to provide instruments for assessment of prior learning as a condition of admissions. There was a time when colleges made up and administered their own admissions tests; now students pay a separate fee for a service that was once provided by the college in its total package.

But it is within the past decade that we have seen an explosive growth of new educational delivery systems that represent a wholesale *external* unbundling of higher education services with the adult, or non-traditional, market in mind.

Empire State College, Thomas Edison College, the educational brokering agencies funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, and the educational opportunity and information centers, all represent a market response to the failure of traditional colleges to adapt to the needs of non-traditional students. Each has specialized in one of the "core" services we

*An article by George Weathersby and Frederic Jacobs that discusses unbundling as a strategy did not come to my attention until after the project was underway. I have found it most helpful in clarifying my own conceptual framework. (See Weathersby and Jacobs, *Institutional Goals and Student Costs*. ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 2 [1977] AAHE, Washington, D.C.)

listed above. Only direct instruction has been left as the preserve of the university.

The question, then, that we raise in our unbundling experiment is whether it is possible to unbundle *internally*. Is it feasible to give each of the "core" services a separate price without disrupting a learning community?

AN EXPERIMENT IN "UNBUNDLING"

Private colleges have been all but shut out of the adult market—90 percent of adult students enroll in public colleges and universities*—partly because of the enormous price differential between subsidized and unsubsidized institutions. I saw unbundling as a possible route to making private colleges more price competitive with the public sector. To be competitive, unbundling, while addressing the question of equity, would have to make good financial sense for the institutions involved.

Unbundling the credit-hour charge is not an easy step for a college to take. The underlying problems and challenges can be phrased as questions: How can we achieve equity for mature students without putting colleges into a state of great financial risk? How can we avoid having day students transfer into evening classes to take advantage of the unbundled prices (disintermediation)? How can we avoid a sudden increase in the tuition of full-time day students if the subsidy from the evening division is withdrawn? How will the discrete services be priced and access controlled?

It was to answer these questions and others like them that five private colleges in different parts of the country recently undertook an experiment in unbundling, with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The five colleges participating in the project are: Caldwell College (NJ), Mercy College (NY), Mercyhurst College (PA), Tusculum College (TN) and Unity College (ME).

My role in the experiment is that of provocateur and mentor. In raising the question of whether unbundling the traditional price structure might produce a dual effect—i.e., not only more equity but also better service for part-time students—I knew it could not be answered in the abstract. The location of the college, its student constituency, and its internal social, economic and political climate had to be factored into the unbundling equation. Therefore, the experiments were designed by the staff of the participating college within a generalized theoretical framework. Thus far, only partial results are available, since all the experiments began with the spring 1978 semester. In its narrowest focus, unbundling is a test of the price sensitivity of part-time students. Unbundling makes sense as a market strategy only if students clearly perceive that buying services that carry separate price tags is to their greater advantage than buying them in a package.

The next step will take place once the package is broken open. Then colleges may face the prospect that adult students will not choose to buy directly what they had been subsidizing indirectly. At this stage, market forces require a restructuring of the services themselves to make them more attractive.

The final outcome, if we are fortunate, will be a newly structured learning community that is more responsive to the needs of adult students.

THE AUDIT: SIMPLEST FORM OF UNBUNDLING

The simplest form of unbundling, and one that many colleges and universities have already undertaken, is the audit system. When a student audits a course, he or she forgoes the right to two of the core functions: assessment of direct instruction and certification. While many colleges have unbundled in the sense of allowing students to audit courses, the pricing systems tend to be irrational. In a random survey of one hundred college catalogs I did not find one instance of a relationship between the price for auditing the course (direct instruction) and the price for credit by examination (assessment of direct instruction and certification.)

In fact, there seemed to be little rationality at all in the pricing of audits. While in most of the colleges (82 per cent), the price of an audit was one-third to one-half that of credit-bearing courses, at six colleges the price of an audit was greater than what full-time students were paying

*NCES analysis of 1976 HEGIS data reported in *Higher Education and National Affairs* of January 27, 1978, (Vol. XXVII, No. 4 p. 11).

for credit courses.

One common aspect of all five projects is that they analyze their fee schedules for audits and credit by examination, with the possibility in mind of marketing the audit as a separate educational opportunity for mature adults.

PRICE SENSITIVITY

Colleges and universities have rarely used price as a marketing device, and the literature dealing with the price sensitivity of adult students is extremely limited.* The work that has been done indicates that adult students are much more sensitive to the length of a course, the time of day that the course is offered, and to the distance and quality factors than they are to its actual price. These studies also show that most adult students have some general notion of a "reasonable" or threshold price, with upper and lower limits defining the acceptability of both the service and the price.

Our experience thus far has confirmed these findings. Without exception, students surveyed feel that the unbundled price structure is fairer to those enrolled part-time. But price is not the dominant factor. When the unbundled price was offered by Mercy College at an inconvenient time of day (3:30 to 6 pm), the course had to be cancelled for lack of enrollment even though it was priced $30 below the going rate. Price sensitivity may also be less acute when students are not paying for courses out of their own pockets. One of the problems we are studying now is whether unbundling is in the best interest of students whose tuition is paid for by company tuition-remission programs.

Attitudes Toward Support Services

Earlier in this paper I raised the question of whether adult students would actually be willing to pay for support services if they were priced separately. Our initial finding is yes, maybe. In the project at Mercyhurst College, 83 percent of the students participating in the program answered a questionnaire indicating that they would enroll in an average of two support seminars in addition to direct instruction. But when it came time actually to register for class, the support seminars were underenrolled and had to be cancelled.

Time is the overriding reality for adult students. They will not sacrifice time for support services if the same time could be spent on credit-bearing courses. This year's experience shows that the scheduling of support services is more important than their quality or content.

COST AND PACKAGING FACTORS

One major advantage to a college in unbundling and repackaging its separate components is that it can offer its support services independent of instruction. At Caldwell College, 20 percent of the students in the program chose only the orientation seminar and did not enroll in any courses. If the support services have a separate price structure, a college may be able to appeal to a broader clientele. In fact, these unbundled services may be offered successfully *only* if they are offered to a wider public.

The college can gain a second advantage if support services can be offered on a group basis rather than on an individual basis. This could mean a more efficient use of professional manpower than colleges ordinarily attain.

Aside from new markets and potential economies of scale, does unbundling make sense on the college's balance sheet? In the colleges I deal with, direct expenditures for instruction run from 35-45 percent of the total educational and general budget. If a balance sheet were prepared for evening courses alone, expenditures for instruction would drop to 15-20 percent, since adjunct and overload pay scales are usually a third of full-time day rates. If evening/weekend programs are looked at as a separate account, there can be plenty of room for price flexibility.

Unbundling makes financial sense if students are sensitive enough to price so that a college can increase its volume of part-time students to more than make up the revenues lost in the price reduction.

*Marvin E. Lamoureux, *Marketing Continuing Education: A Study of Price Strategies*, Occasional Paper No. 11 (British Columbia University, Center for Continuing Education).

TOWARD THE NEW LEARNING COMMUNITY

One potential criticism of unbundling is that it introduces a "cash nexus" into the workings of a learning community. Would unbundling, carried to extremes, be a dissolvent of that community? Could a college become like a turnpike, with a toll-booth every twenty paces?

I would say that any time market forces are allowed to enter a previously closed system, old forms will be dissolved. Unbundling is not an end in itself; it is a mechanism of transition. In much the same way that Marx saw capitalism's "cash nexus" as both a dissolvent of the medieval community and as preparation for a new socialist community, so too unbundling forces colleges to think more creatively about a new learning community for adults.

If this technique can move colleges away from a narrow focus on the requirements of certification, and if it can help colleges initiate cooperative methods of learning, rather than remain as the last bastions of rugged individualism, then this small experiment will have been worthwhile.

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